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This newsletter is organized to align the updates with Strategies from the ***Laying a Foundation for Getting to Zero: California's Integrated HIV Surveillance, Prevention, and Care Plan*** (Integrated Plan). The [Integrated Plan](#) is available on the Office of AIDS' (OA) website.

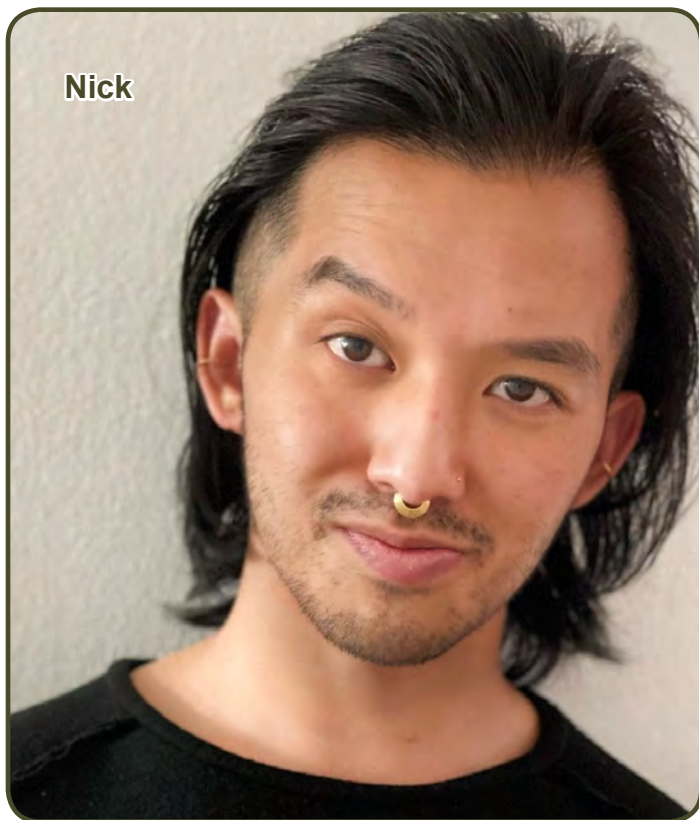
STAFF HIGHLIGHT

OA would like to welcome **Nicholas Wong**, the new Clinical Quality Management Specialist in the ACEI Branch. Nick is an experienced program manager with a background in public health and design. Before joining OA, he worked with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Testing Task Force as a program manager and the San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team as their operations coordinator.

Nick holds a bachelor's degree in Interior Design from San Francisco State University and a master's degree in Public Health from the University of Southern California. During his time studying Interior Design, Nick focused on creating spaces that enhance the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities. He even designed a commercial space specifically for neurodivergent children as part of his capstone project. In his MPH program, Nick conducted research on shelter utilization in San Francisco during inclement weather, which aimed to inform and improve outreach and emergency response policies.

In addition to his professional pursuits, Nick is an accomplished dancer with over 15 years of experience. He continues to take dance classes in his free time and stays active through weightlifting and rock climbing. Nick is also passionate about exploring his creativity through acting and design. And when he's not working

Nick



or pursuing his hobbies, Nick can be found indulging in his love for video games.

HIV AWARENESS

May 18 is National HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (HVAD). HVAD is observed to recognize and appreciate the scientists, health professionals, community member and volunteers who are tirelessly working to develop a vaccine to prevent HIV. This day also provides an opportunity

to bring education and awareness to the importance of preventive HIV vaccine research. This work is essential to ending the HIV pandemic.

May 19 is National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (APIHAAD). This day aims to raise awareness about the unique and important impacts of HIV on Asian and Pacific Islander communities. This day of observance is dedicated to combat stigma and to end the silence and shame that surrounds this issue of HIV in these communities.

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month and May 19th is designated as Hepatitis Testing Day (HTD). The primary goal of HTD is to bring responsiveness of hepatitis B and hepatitis C and to encourage people to learn their status. According to CDC, an estimated 862,000 people are living with hepatitis B and 2.4 million with hepatitis C oftentimes without symptoms until later stages of the infection. Those unaware of their status can potentially spread the disease to others, are more susceptible to complications and other illnesses, and even death. Do your part today and get tested and know your status!

GENERAL UPDATES

➤ COVID-19

OA is committed to providing updated information related to COVID-19. We have disseminated a number of documents in an effort to keep our clients and stakeholders informed. Please refer to our [OA website](#) to stay informed.

➤ Mpox

OA is committed to providing updated information related to mpox. We have partnered with the Division of Communicable Disease Control (DCDC), a program within the Center of Infectious Diseases and have disseminated

a number of documents in an effort to keep our clients and stakeholders informed. Please refer to the [DCDC website](#) to stay informed.

[Spanish mpox digital assets](#) are now available for LHJs and CBOs.

➤ Racial Justice and Health Equity

The Racial & Health Equity (RHE) workgroup aims to gain insight and understanding of racial and health equity efforts throughout the CDPH and take next steps towards advancing RHE in our work. The workgroup has formed subcommittees to address community stakeholder engagement challenges, improve OA policy and practices to support RHE and increasing OA knowledge and attitude on RHE among leadership and staff.

➤ HIV/STD/HCV Integration

Now that the Emergency Declaration has ended and the COVID-19 response is winding down, we are reinitiating our integration discussions and moving forward with the necessary steps to integrate our HIV, STI, and HCV programs into a single new Division. We will continue to keep you apprised on our journey!

ENDING THE EPIDEMICS STRATEGIC PLAN OA/STD

Thanks to the California Planning Group (CPG) who hosted a **Strategic Plan and Implementation Blueprint** discussion during their May in-person meeting in Long Beach. CPG focused their discussion on the Stigma Free section of the Plan and talked about what success looks like in providing stigma free services.

Ending the HIV, HCV, and STI syndemic will require breaking down negative beliefs to make it

safer for people to share their status with others and seek the preventive services and health care they need and deserve, knowing that they can expect to be treated with dignity and respect. Thanks to all who are working to end HIV/STI/HCV stigma in California.

The [URL below documents our work](#), including the phase-1 roadmap, the recording of our Statewide Town Hall, and the list of completed regional listening sessions:

- <https://facenteconsulting.com/work/ending-the-epidemics/>

STRATEGY A

Improve Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Utilization:

➤ PrEP-Assistance Program (AP)

As of May 1, 2023, there are 203 PrEP-AP enrollment sites covering 189 clinics that currently make up the PrEP-AP Provider network.

A [comprehensive list of the PrEP-AP Provider Network](https://cdphdata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6878d3a1c9724418aebfea96878cd5b2) can be found at <https://cdphdata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6878d3a1c9724418aebfea96878cd5b2>.

[Data on active PrEP-AP clients](#) can be found in the three tables displayed on page 5 of this newsletter.

STRATEGY B

Increase and Improve HIV Testing:

OA has expanded its Building Healthy Online Communities (BHOC) self-testing program to allow for rapid OraQuick test orders in all jurisdictions in California.

TAKEMEHOME



The program, [TakeMeHome](https://takemehome.org/), (<https://takemehome.org/>) is advertised on gay dating apps, where users see an ad for home testing and are offered a free HIV-home test kit. In March, 240 individuals in 33 counties ordered self-test kits, with 204 individuals ordering 2 tests. Most individuals ordering tests identify as cisgender men (81.9% of those sharing gender) and Hispanic/Latinx (51.7% of those sharing race or ethnicity). Eleven (4.6 %) orders came in through the Spanish language portal. Most participants reported either never having tested for HIV before (30.4%) or not testing for HIV in at least one year (32.1%). OA is excited to help make HIV testing more accessible through this program.

OA's existing TakeMeHome Program continues in the six California Consortium Phase I Ending the HIV Epidemic in America counties. In the first 31 months, between September 1, 2020, and March 31, 2023, 5310 tests have been distributed. This month, mail-in lab tests (including dried blood spot tests for HIV, syphilis, and Hepatitis C, as well as 3-site tests for gonorrhea and chlamydia) accounted for 254 (71.6%) of the 355 total tests distributed.

Of individuals ordering a test in March, 37.5% reported never before receiving an HIV test, and 51.3% were 17 to 29 years of age. Among individuals reporting race or ethnicity, 36.8% were Hispanic/Latinx, and of those reporting sexual history, 50.6% indicated 3 or more partners in the past 12 months. To date, 577 recipients have completed an anonymous follow up survey, with 94.6% indicating they would recommend TakeMeHome HIV test kits to a friend. The most common behavioral risks of HIV exposure reported in the follow up survey were being a man who has sex with men (71.1%) or having had more than one sex partner in the past 12 months (63.6%).

STRATEGY C

Expand Partner Services:

The California Prevention Training Center (CAPTC) in collaboration with CDPH, OA and the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Control Branch (STD CB) is happy to announce the Virtual DIS Summit 2023. The theme for the Summit is DIS, Cornerstones of Public Health: Then, Now and into the Future. Save the Dates – June 5th, 7th, & 9th – Registration opens in May. For [questions or more information](#) contact linda.desantis@ucsf.edu.

STRATEGY G

Improve Availability of HIV Care:

OA's HIV Care Branch is looking for a new Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program provider for Santa Cruz County. We released a Request for Application (RFA) (#23-10079) on April 24, 2023, with a **closing date of May 19, 2023**. The award amount is approximately \$215,000.

HOPWA provides housing assistance and supportive services to prevent or reduce homelessness for persons living with HIV

(PLWH). Local government entities (e.g., health departments or community development agencies) and non-profit community-based organizations may apply.

View the RFA at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cid/doa/pages/HOPWA-RFA-23-10079.aspx>.

STRATEGY J

Increase Rates of Insurance/ Benefits Coverage for PLWH or on PrEP:

As of May 1, 2023, the number of ADAP clients enrolled in each respective ADAP Insurance Assistance Program are shown in the chart at the bottom of this page.

STRATEGY K

Increase and Improve HIV Prevention and Support Services for People Who Use Drugs:

➤ **Funding Opportunity: Opioid Use and Stimulant Use Education, Outreach and Prevention for Increased Risk Communities** *(continued on page 6)*

ADAP Insurance Assistance Program	Number of Clients Enrolled	Percentage Change from March
Employer Based Health Insurance Premium Payment (EB-HIPP) Program	489	+ 3.10%
Office of AIDS Health Insurance Premium Payment (OA-HIPP) Program	5,736	- 0.86%
Medicare Part D Premium Payment (MDPP) Program	1,039	- 18.90%
Total	7,264	- 3.80%

Source: ADAP Enrollment System

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Age and Insurance Coverage:

Current Age	PrEP-AP Only		PrEP-AP With Medi-Cal		PrEP-AP With Medicare		PrEP-AP With Private Insurance		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18 - 24	268	8%	---	---	---	---	27	1%	295	8%
25 - 34	1,089	31%	3	0%	1	0%	247	7%	1,340	39%
35 - 44	891	26%	---	---	1	0%	174	5%	1,066	31%
45 - 64	447	13%	1	0%	20	1%	92	3%	560	16%
65+	21	1%	---	---	187	5%	9	0%	217	6%
TOTAL	2,716	78%	4	0%	209	6%	549	16%	3,478	100%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Age and Race/Ethnicity:

Current Age	Latinx		American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		White		More Than One Race Reported		Decline to Provide		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18 - 24	162	5%	---	---	36	1%	12	0%	1	0%	59	2%	3	0%	22	1%	295	8%
25 - 34	787	23%	2	0%	116	3%	83	2%	3	0%	268	8%	10	0%	71	2%	1,340	39%
35 - 44	698	20%	3	0%	85	2%	38	1%	1	0%	196	6%	5	0%	40	1%	1,066	31%
45 - 64	360	10%	2	0%	33	1%	16	0%	1	0%	133	4%	---	---	15	0%	560	16%
65+	21	1%	1	0%	3	0%	3	0%	---	---	185	5%	---	---	4	0%	217	6%
TOTAL	2,028	58%	8	0%	273	8%	152	4%	6	0%	841	24%	18	1%	152	4%	3,478	100%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Gender and Race/Ethnicity:

Gender	Latinx		American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		White		More Than One Race Reported		Decline to Provide		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	170	5%	---	---	4	0%	10	0%	1	0%	12	0%	---	---	3	0%	200	6%
Male	1,662	48%	8	0%	251	7%	138	4%	5	0%	803	23%	16	0%	129	4%	3,012	87%
Trans	177	5%	---	---	15	0%	4	0%	---	---	15	0%	1	0%	6	0%	218	6%
Unknown	19	1%	---	---	3	0%	---	---	---	---	11	0%	1	0%	14	0%	48	1%
TOTAL	2,028	58%	8	0%	273	8%	152	4%	6	0%	841	24%	18	1%	152	4%	3,478	100%

All PrEP-AP charts prepared by: ADAP Fiscal Forecasting Evaluation and Monitoring (AFFEM) Section, ADAP and Care Evaluation and Informatics Branch, Office of AIDS. Client was eligible for PrEP-AP as of run date: 04/30/2023 at 12:01:16 AM
Data source: ADAP Enrollment System. Site assignments are based on the site that submitted the most recent application.

The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), in partnership with The Center at Sierra Health Foundation, released two requests for applications (RFAs). The projects will fund drug education and prevention for two spirit (2s), lesbian, gay, and bisexual 2S/LGBTQ+ and Communities of Color.

Submissions are due May 8th.

- **2S/LGBTQ+ Communities** - This RFA has a total of \$5 million in available funds to be awarded to 25 to 35 organizations, with a maximum of up to \$200,000 per organization.
- **Communities of Color** - This RFA has a total of \$12 million in available funds to be awarded to 50 to 60 organizations, with a maximum of up to \$250,000 per organization. Contracts will cover activities for the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

➤ **Research: Negative Health Effects of Involuntary Displacement of People Experiencing Homelessness Who Inject Drugs**

Involuntary displacement, also known as sweeps, forces people experiencing homelessness (PEH) to regularly relocate from one temporary location to another. Involuntary displacement is often done without connecting people to services. A study concluded that involuntary displacement is estimated to worsen overdose, hospitalizations and decrease initiations of medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and contribute to deaths among PEH who inject drugs.

The study can be found at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37036716/>

➤ **Naloxone Vending Machines on Sovereign Land in San Diego County**

The Pala Band of Mission Indians partnered with Harm Reduction Coalition of San Diego to install the first naloxone vending machine on sovereign land. Funded through San Diego County, the machine is located at the Pala Fire Department and will be a vital tool in reducing fentanyl overdoses and preventing opioid-related deaths. Two additional vending machines are scheduled for installation.

Watch the local news clip at <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/pala-band-of-mission-indians-installs-naloxone-vending-machine-calls-it-first-for-u-s-tribal-lands/3213039/>

STRATEGY N

Enhance Collaborations and Community Involvement:

The CPG and OA hosted the first Spring in-person CPG meeting post the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was held on Monday, May 1 – Wednesday, May 3, 2023, at the Hyatt Regency, in Long Beach, CA. On May 1st we hosted our fifth CPG Leadership Academy, which focused on skills and capacity building for current CPG members only. May 2nd and 3rd were open to the public with a public-comment period on both of those days.

The meeting agenda and additional information can be found at https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OA_CPG.aspx

For questions regarding this issue of The OA Voice, please send an e-mail to angelique.skinner@cdph.ca.gov.